



LATERAL MOVES - ACROSS DISCIPLINES

LATERAL MOVES - ACROSS DISCIPLINES is an edited conversation with Randy Martin and three members of the Cultural Studies Praxis Collective (CSPC): Miriam Bartha, Diane Douglas, and Kanta Kochhar-Lindgren. The original conversation took place at the University of Washington's Simpson Center for the Humanities in 2007. The transcript of the conversation was reworked and revised by the interlocutors and Bruce Burgett, the co-director (along with Kanta Kochhar-Lindgren) of the CSPC. The document as a whole surfaces and addresses a series of questions about interdisciplinarity, cultural studies, and the humanities; about creativity, agency, and advocacy; about different forms of professional, disciplinary, and civic education; and about knowledge, labor, and organizing.

In the current historical moment as yet another "crisis of the humanities" reshapes the possibilities of collaborative work across disciplines and sectors, discussions of these questions help to map some of the potential risks and opportunities on the horizon. In order to highlight these potentials, we invite readers to send us comments on the conversation. Following a strategy used by the CSPC in its meetings, we ask each contributor to choose a brief passage, sentence, or phrase that they found useful, provocative, or engaging, and to amplify on its significance in the current moment. Responses will be added to the text.

As an initial publication for the Universities in Question thread of lateral, we offer the conversation as an example of work that draws upon one of a range of collaborations undertaken over the past five years that have entangled the thread co-curators, Bruce Burgett and Randy Martin. We present the piece in a spirit of self-reflection and self-criticism that is meant to seed additional work and invite other participants. Our hope is that this practice of additive and affiliative critique and creation will model for future readers a mode of engagement with a conversation that we see as ongoing.



We thought we'd begin by asking you talk about your interest in the field of cultural studies. Can you sketch for us the path that brought you to your current work at the intersections of arts, education, cultural studies, and arts and cultural policy?



That's a nice invitation to articulate a creation myth. As a kid, I had a passion for science and, in the last couple years of high school, I had the chance to be seriously involved in doing experimental medical research. The college I went on to - UC San Diego - was over 90% pre-med, and that cured me of my interest in medicine. Even then, I found the impossibility of having a broad conversation about medicine from within the pre-med formation really striking. In some ways, I think of this discomfort as the impulse that pushed me toward the first in a series of lateral moves across disciplines. It's a migratory movement, not one that is nondisciplinary. I am still marked, as we all are, by the banding around my wings wherever I go. But the question is what you take with you and what you notice that's different as you move across disciplinary lines.

My disenchantment with medicine led me down a circuitous path: from UC San Diego to UC Berkeley to UW Madison to CUNY; from urban studies to sociology to dance; from working in a paint factory to graduate student organizing to writing a dissertation on the dance company I was in, led by Claudia Gitelman. The dissertation looked at the process of dance creation from the first rehearsal to the performance, and the shift in authority from something that's linguistic to something that's embodied and gives rise to a community. At the same time, I was studying acting and creating political theater, where questions about collective creativity and organization, authority and authorship, and community were also foregrounded. All of this led me to a position as a generalist in a small liberal arts college and, eventually, to NYU, where I currently direct the Master of Arts in Arts Politics.

As I look back on it, my trajectory speaks, I think, to something about the disciplinary and institutional predicament of cultural studies as distinct from the humanities. In the humanities, the place from which you generalize, "the human," can be taken for granted. If you begin from this other location, "culture" or "the cultural," you wind up setting off from the particular. You begin from a specific location and ask, "How do I generalize? Where do I generalize from? Is this a generalization of self? What's left out and what's included?"



That predicament also speaks to tensions active within the institutional location where we're holding this conversation today, the UW Simpson Center for the Humanities. Like other humanities centers, the Simpson Center is a site set apart from disciplines and departments; it's intended to permit and promote a shuttling among the humanities, the arts, the social sciences, and, increasingly, the natural sciences. It's supposed to produce knowledge that's transformative of these divisions. At the same time, the Center sits within the Division of the Humanities and is often seen as having the responsibility of supporting the actually existing humanities. The challenge is how not to be bound by the Center's emplacement with the Division of the Humanities.

Speaking from this not atypical institutional location, my question is how cultural studies does and can operate within this kind of contradictory formation, one that aims to promote the production of critical knowledge that is both "interdisciplinary" and "humanistic?" How does the predicament of not assuming the generality of a tradition of knowledge play out in your current practice as Director of the MA in Arts Politics?



Great questions. The location of the Arts Politics program in the Department of Art and Public Policy in the Tisch School of the Arts might seem oxymoronic. After all, what is public policy doing in an arts school? What's interesting in this context is the relationship between the local, institutional formation of Arts Politics and the translocal, intellectual formation of cultural studies. Even as we see the emergence over the past two decades of professional organizations designed to institutionalize cultural studies as a field or discipline, the way in which professional socialization works in relationship to labor markets and institutions today is very different from the world that led to the formation of disciplines at the end of the nineteenth century.

One result is that when people form the question, "Should we have a cultural studies department or should cultural studies remain interdisciplinary?" there's always a temptation to appeal to the discursive field formation of "cultural studies" as evidence to support disciplinary forms of institutionalization. It is different than asking, "Should we have an English Department?" or "Should we have a History Department?" You almost never have to ask those questions, even if the questions should be rightfully asked! The architecture of disciplinary institutionalization assumes that the epistemology of the field is stable.

My starting points, including those that led to the development of the Arts Politics program, are different. I tend to begin with questions about organizing, about activism, about reading what resources are at hand, and about how those resources articulate with a set of projects: who they mobilize, and what they organize. For me, what's interesting and provocative about cultural studies is that it can keep this second set of questions alive by dwelling on a theory-practice dynamic that references both global or conceptual or intellectual spaces and local or translocal spaces of institutional practice.

In the cases of the Arts Politics program and the Art and Public Policy department at Tisch, the local institutional problem was how to create a space outside the traditional arts conservatory programs that could begin to address the question of how artists get their work into the world. So the department was addressing a problem of

conservatory formation - a very strong version of disciplinarity - as well as the ways in which professional demands impede upon university education. The concept of "artistic citizenship" spoke to the question of what you do in a predicament where you might have incredible chops as an artist and you still don't have a world that's receptive to your art. That's the question we wanted to put to our students.



So artists are repositioned as advocates of their own work and for the public role of the arts more generally?



Exactly. Let me give an example of how we addressed this challenge in our undergraduate curriculum. We created a first-year program that would get at the tensions among a conservatory program, a professional program, and an arts program within a university. The project of the department was to create a curriculum where the core content is a practice, essay writing, and that practice is posed to engage art analytically and critically. The point is to create a trajectory that advocates for representing the arts, that uses essay writing as a voice, and that develops public intellectuals on behalf of the arts. The curriculum works as a vehicle to ask the freshmen, how do you generalize yourself?

Again, this is very different from how freshmen composition gets installed in the humanities, where the work of generalization tends to be taken for granted. You acquire skills to do essay writing, but the form is already set. You insert yourself into this universal form (which is also a universal self), and become generally educated. But if you can't take form for granted, the path that moves you from your particular, located experience to your place as an artist who moves in the world is indeterminate. You can't take the form of expression or its generalization for granted. That's a huge struggle for these first-year students, many of whom want to focus on making art and don't want to be bothered with thinking about the form their self-representation should take.

At least that was the founding project at the undergraduate level. Our next step was to do something similar at the graduate level. But the immediate question that came up when we proposed the graduate program was, why locate it in an arts school? What made Arts Politics engaging were the links among kindred schools at NYU, like Public Policy, but also the arts, which are also dispersed across the university. Each college made a claim to the program.



That's a hard one: to find the right moment to respect the historical trajectories of an institution, to pass beyond the territorialities that come with those histories, and to create new spaces for work in the arts. This new work is not something that could have been anticipated from within those traditions; it comes, surprisingly, from a specific critical engagement that pushes at the notion of what the arts are and what they can do.



At NYU, the dynamic you're describing became an opportunity to organize partnerships across different colleges, to sit down with deans who were very skeptical that something that had a critical epistemology could be located in an arts school, even though there are Ph.D. programs in performance studies and cinema studies at Tisch. Those programs are over-determined because the degrees are nominally, at least, granted through the graduate school, the arts and sciences division, as opposed to the arts school. So there's an interesting tension there, a legitimization of art as an epistemology, and as a way of knowing.

The Arts Politics program was an effort to do some internal organizing around the arts, so that art - even in a small and very modest sense - could be a vehicle for beginning to mobilize some new coalitions and develop some new passageways. The conception of the program was to keep it very small, so that there'd be enough room at the table for people from different colleges and different graduate programs. I would say the litmus test is if the term 'arts politics' makes any sense to the students.



We're doing something similar with our Interdisciplinary Arts major at UW Bothell, and there's a lot of resonance between what you're describing at NYU and what we've been thinking about and working on. There are also resonances, different ones, with our Masters of Arts in Cultural Studies. I'm wondering if you could speak to the challenges of the type of approach to program building you're describing.



One of the problems we encountered in terms of proprietary claims among different existing programs at NYU concerned the category of "the cultural." The first iteration of our program was called "Cultural Politics," and that generated huge anxiety. The

category mobilized multiple claims on what, where, and who had the right to do something under the aegis of culture, and it exposed the contradictions, too. If five different colleges are making a proprietary claim on the term "culture" then they're all involved in undermining their own claim!



Right. But didn't that experience also prove that culture was an appropriate term to use for a program meant to draw from a spectrum of disciplines and schools?



It turns out that not everyone believes in the power of the semantic, even though some very prominent semioticians got involved in this struggle. Conventional real estate claims were being made. NYU is a school whose endowment is in real estate, so it's no surprise that academic politics get expressed in those terms.

But I now think that shifting from "cultural politics" to "arts politics" was felicitous. The word is not a neologism, but the formulation is. It says something about the moment of cultural studies and its own turn from a kind of unreflective generality to an emphasis on thinking about the specific locations where and how it intervenes. In this sense, reducing the semantic field of the program actually opened it up. It dissolved the imperial claim that was being made through the category of culture. It made it possible to recognize the authority of the arts school to give a credential in something called 'arts.' It also contained an ambiguity of meaning: What *is* arts politics? Is it the politics of art? Is it a claim that politics issue from the arts? Is it a claim that arts can activate other things? Certainly one of the questions we wanted to pose was about activism: What is activism? If activism is part of the program, what is it doing in a university? What does it mean to credential activism? We wanted to address these questions and 'cultural politics' didn't pose them with as much specificity.



You are naming a moment in cultural studies that requires it to turn from unreflective generality to critical self-reflection on where and how it intervenes. I think that's right. Here's a parallel example. The Cultural Studies Praxis Collective (CSPC) has been performing some of its work on cultural studies under the banner of the "public humanities," in part as a result of local institutional factors concerning the mission of the Simpson Center to engage in and support public scholarship in the humanities. Under this banner, we've had the opportunity to undertake cultural work that is more affiliative, more engaged, and more transformative of university-based knowledge practices, including those housed in the traditional humanities.

One common thread woven through these local projects concerns the question of what might be the next steps for cultural studies if it is going to promote and support a praxis-oriented understanding of research and teaching. I hear you suggesting that these next steps may require a greater awareness of how we do and can develop research and teaching projects that work across sectors, including disciplines, both on and off university campuses. It is this critical and practical engagement with other sectors that is going to put pressure on the unreflective generality you've just described, and it is the development of joint projects that will necessitate action and reflection, pushing the question of where and how one intervenes.



Let me add another layer to that. We've been talking about introducing critical *and* instrumental questions about politics, advocacy, and activism into professional programs in the arts and humanities. These interventions challenge humanities programs, which don't tend to think of themselves as oriented toward vocations or professions, even as they reproduce academic career tracks. But it also challenges arts programs, which often think of themselves very much in vocational and professional terms, to re-conceive and redirect their work. I'm wondering about the connections between professional or vocational training and other questions about cultural labor and activism.



You're right. Compared to the humanities, the trajectory of the arts is a more professional one, and even in earlier iterations of artistic training a more vocational one. In the early part of the twentieth century, with the development of arts education programs, that instrumentality was directed not towards art-making, but towards civic formation. To take up some of those trajectories is very different than, again, the generalizing claims of the humanities about what it means to be well-educated, well-rounded, a whole person.

In this context, the formulation of arts politics also calls attention to the relationship of new interdisciplinary programs to the university. It insists that the claim of the university to be at the center of knowledge-making, to be at the origin

of the production of knowledge, is no longer secure, as Miriam points out. Educationally, this decentering of the university means that graduate programs can no longer justify themselves either, in the case of the arts, in instrumental terms as credentialing programs or, in the case of the humanities, in non-instrumental terms as purely academic. In an arts school like Tisch, a concrete, critical possibility had to replace instrumental claims about the purpose of the Arts Politics program.

As we articulated it, the program is designed for people who are already doing work in the world and want to make a path back through the university. It provides for a lateral move from the domain of professional practice, which is where I would say the locus of cultural knowledge production is now, in terms of the cultural industries. It's not in the university, unless we re-conceive of arts sectors within the university as a part of those industries, a move that entails its own risks. Instead, the university becomes a place for staging and reflecting on an encounter. In our program, it's an encounter between artists, people who work in arts institutions, and people who do critical, curatorial, other sorts of representational politics around the arts.

One significant implication of this re-imagining of the university's function is that training in the arts can no longer be envisioned in craft terms. Most of the traditional academic disciplines still hold onto the guild model where you apprentice yourself in order to reproduce the guild and become a professor. I prefer to think about arts in industrial terms because it shifts the focus to questions about exchange and interaction across guilds. To think about the university as part of the industrial sector means there may be losses and risks of instrumentality, but not necessarily losses to be nostalgic about or risks to avoid. Cultural studies is positioned to imagine the university as something other than an innocent, pristine, non-instrumentalist sphere, as many narratives of the decline of the university would have it. It can trace the ways in which the university has circulated knowledge and ask: What is the knowledge industry that the university is a moment and part of?



That seems to be the central question: Will the university be able to adapt to a decentered position among these nodes of creative production, activism, and critical practice? As part of this discussion about the university as part of industrial relations, you've spoken eloquently about the intersections of cultural labor and knowledge. In *Chalk Lines* (1999) and elsewhere you write about graduate students as laborers within the university and as activists outside the university, and you've talked about how the experience of having one foot in the world of art-making and one foot in sociology, theory, and critique positioned you in terms of your practice. I'm wondering if you could talk about how this approach manifests itself within the pedagogy and curriculum design of the new graduate program.



In terms of curriculum design, we wanted to strike a balance organizationally between the rigidity of disciplinarity and the curricular blankness that tends to plague interdisciplinary humanities programs, particularly at the MA level where students can often choose to take anything from anywhere. My experience is that throwing the university at students in this way can be really disorienting, because the university doesn't organize itself in curricular terms. There are advising, access, and critical literacy issues that follow from doing interdisciplinary studies in a field or institution that's defined in disciplinary terms. You owe it to students to be able to tell them at the front end what they'll be able to access and what preparation they'll need.

One way we've tried to address that problem is to ask students to articulate as a part of the admissions process a very clear sense of a project or a place they're coming from. At the same time, we want them to be able to say: "Here's how I will let go of the project or place. Here's what I need, here's what I'm missing, here's what I lack." They need to be able to articulate both things in their admissions materials. The third thing we're asking for is a conventional research paper that allows us to assess their ability to move across a range of academically-constructed disciplinary choices.

The underlying claim we're making with respect to activism, critical politics, and the arts is that, in fact, there isn't a crisis of art or a crisis of politics. There's a crisis of evaluation. Statistically, it's hard to come up with a measure of the arts sector that sees it as being less than it once was. There's certainly more of it, and I would say the same thing of arts politics. There are more domains of human activity and expression, more objects of political contestation, than there have ever been, and there are material and institutional expressions of that proliferation, as we see in the historic growth of non-governmental organizations and the not-for-profit sector. This proliferation filters down very specifically into people's experience.

The dilemma someone making art faces today is how to elaborate the significance of their work beyond the immediate discussion of it. The Arts Politics program is meant to give them a framework to imagine what is the outside, the beyond of their work, so that they might move in those directions.



The process of learning how to explain the significance of one's work, and of finding a language and theoretical frame for what is actually emerging through the art practice itself is potentially very empowering for students. Can you talk about how this plays out pedagogically in specific courses?



We have a very specific trajectory within our curriculum, with two core courses that make the move from the conceptualization of where someone is located to the moment in which they would elaborate their work in a more expanded field. The first introduces students to the different registers of theoretical work that could begin to complicate and problematize where they are and how they think about art and culture, institutional politics, methods, and trajectories. The second required course is a seminar in arts activism that asks students to come up with a plan for intervention.

Beyond these two courses, there's an openness, with almost as many credits available outside the department as inside. We've tried to make the experience of partnership and coalition part of the curricular design. The consequence is a real burden of advising. Faculty members have to have knowledge of the university, they have to be conversant enough outside of their own school or college to be able to say, "if these are your interests, here's how you can begin to navigate the university." That in itself is an instance of arts politics, both for the individual student and for the faculty members in the program. It's what sets the program in motion.



I'm fascinated by the intent to enrich students' creative experience by providing them with tools to evaluate their work and place it in larger contexts. What you just said about faculty advising, and the knowledge it requires, is a natural bridge to asking about methods of assessment for the program itself. From a faculty member's perspective and from a student's perspectives, what does success look like?



There's no doubt that evaluation is and will be a challenge. If we're serious about taking students with these very different formations, locations, and preparations, and about giving them something of value in exchange for their tuition, then we need assessments that not only say "here's the assignment and what's expected of you," but also "here's how I evaluate you within the course of your own trajectory." This requires moving off the impersonal and transcendental model of achievement, which is quite entrenched.

When I was dean of faculty in the arts school, this same question would come up when I asked to see faculty members' syllabi and assessments. Many faculty would say, "I give a grade on the basis of talent..." I would respond, "If you believe that's true, then you're going to put yourself out of a job!" If all you can do is to claim that you know it when you see it, then the metaphysics of talent mean that you have nothing to do with it! In art and studio critiques, it's a very common rhetorical move: "Oh, yes, this really works." But the performative "it works" actually elides any discussion of what "working" means, what "its" structure or effects are, and what authority is being invoked.



In the humanities, there's a parallel investment in the concept of a cultivated and discerning "sensitivity" that also suppresses serious discussions about assessment. As a result, a concern with assessment is liable to mark one as a petty bureaucrat, a gatekeeper, a person of small focus or concern.



It's a very common formulation, though its specific terms vary across disciplines and professions. Our response has been to ask the program and the students to reflect on what it means for something to work. The challenge is to enable students to articulate the demands of sufficiency for their projects if they're to succeed, or if they're to be elaborated on their own terms. We do that by having strong mentors, by making use of relationships among projects, and by always circling back to the claims the projects make. We ask the questions, "What does this project presuppose? What are its demands of resources? How might it be evaluated on its own terms?"

In my experience, when one can allow the work of teaching evaluation to become a means of teaching the politics of judgment, then evaluation becomes something that is itself pedagogical. When I was a dean and had to address faculty concerns about the university's move to standardize teaching evaluation, I argued that the only chance we

have is to craft our own thicker, more robust version that can answer the same questions. You want the practitioners - the faculty - to be leading that process. In this context, I would say exactly the same for students. That's the responsibility of the program: to teach the students those means of evaluation.



Let me shift the focus of our conversation a bit by introducing a new term. So far, we've been talking about the framework of art-making, and the implications of that framework. Another way this conversation sometimes unfolds is through the discourse of creativity, a term that comes up frequently these days in discussions of creative classes, creative economies, creative campuses, and so on. I wonder if you could speak about some of the problems and opportunities involved in this shift from arts and arts-making to creativity.



Absolutely. A kind of false promise underlies all of those formulations: the idea that we have moved from an industrial to a post-industrial economy, from manual to mental labor. When we commit ourselves to cross-sectoral forms of arts politics, we have to be really careful about how those concepts and practices have gotten aligned with the idea of a classless society, as well as the denigration of self that comes with the conceptual move from manual to mental labor. If art is interesting, it's interesting because it refuses that distinction.

It's only in the academic credentializing of art that the division of mind and body is imposed. In the conservatory tradition, art moves from a craft apprenticeship to a discursive field called 'the arts' in which you become master, a status that allows you to work in the university. That tradition is the granddaddy of the creative class model, generalized in the hands of Richard Florida and others to the formulation of the post-industrial society. The figure of the creative person, the artistic creator, is freed from the conflicts that come from industrial society. The concept of the creative class is inserted into urban planning, where it does a lot of the same ideological work.

But there's also a longer trajectory here. The Rockefeller Fund Report that gave rise to the National Endowment for the Arts in the mid-1960s promoted public art as an answer to urban strife. It linked the arts to urban pacification. One also thinks of one of the more progressive figures and moments in the Clinton administration, Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, and his notion of the symbolic analyst as the leading force in the new knowledge economy. Before the symbolic analyst, it was the yuppie - the young, urban professional which, when you spun out the numbers, corresponded to 5% of the people who were 25 and under and working in cities in the 1980s.

Florida's celebration of the so-called "rise of the creative class" is an extension of these diverse tendencies. When you look at it closely, it is little more than a market contest in which planners and policy-makers in economically troubled urban areas compete to draw the young and the beautiful to their cities: "If you have the perfect latte, you can engender the perfect urban density." This idea of the creative class also corresponds to the humanization of managerialism that one gets in the 1980s: corporate culturalism, the reassessment of more humane approaches to management, quality circles, the enlistment of more opportunities for leisure in the workplace.

Andrew Ross's ethnographic study of labor relations in the "new economy" in *No Collar* is a wonderful account of these processes and their false promises. Remove the boundaries between work and play and you wind up working a lot more! The idea of the artisanal commitment to a craft suddenly means that labor is freed from the spatial and temporal constraints of the office. All of those false promises about the social utility of creativity are matters of concern.



Those are all really important points, but I'd like to press on something I also find troubling in this literature. Coming at this question with an interest in the potential for moving between disciplines and sectors, I'm struck by the tendency to absent artists and arts-making from the conversation. It's as if the work of creativity can be taken on by anyone. Here's this meaty, cross-sectoral conversation about creativity, but we're not going to talk with the artists, the people who have been working on how to create new stories, performances, exhibitions, music, or whatever. They're not at the table.



In terms of urban planning and redevelopment, the artist and processes of arts-making are omitted because, fundamentally, the discourse of creativity is about consumption and consumerism. Creativity is important insofar as it lends an aesthetic patina to

certain urban zones. The specificity of individual artists, the specter of labor, of making work, and of having a capacity to retain some possession of the means of production, dissemination, and distribution all fade from view. The presence of the artist's labor and capacity to organize work, to create work, and to introduce work would challenge the corporate framework in the capitalist sense and the civic sense, right?



Right. So let's connect this insight to what you were saying earlier about educating artists to understand how to elaborate the significance of their work. In this context, the discourse about creativity and urban development has some interesting implications, including possibilities for interventions in that conversation. For example, we don't just need new spaces for the arts, we also need to have artists who are capable of working to intervene in patterns of creative capitalism and gentrification. Otherwise, we risk reinscribing the inside art, outside art problem. The more tools artists have to engage with these questions from multiple directions, the better.



Yes, absolutely. When you look at the public controversies around the arts, ranging from Jesse Helms and Robert Mapplethorpe to Rudy Giuliani and the Sensation exhibit, and when you put them in a civic setting, you have to recognize that many of them are about willfully *not* seeing work. The controversies are a public performance of the disappearance of art and artists.



And they're about moving public art into debates about proprietary claims and rights. Take Richard Serra's "Tilted Arc" as an example. Who gets to say when the work is altered, where it belongs, if it can be moved - the artist, the owner, the elected official?



Yes, yes. And this allows us to do the flip that I think you're alluding to. What is so menacing about artists that you have to so studiously avoid them? How can you have this kind of marginality of the artist at the same time you have this incredible potency?



This paradox also has implications for what's happening in K-12 public education. By shutting down their arts programs, public schools are stripping kids of their right to develop their voices and to build community in diverse ways.



Absolutely. A few years ago, one of my principal forms of community-engaged work was as PTA president in my kids' school, a New York City public elementary school with an arts-based curriculum. In the context of city and state takeovers of curriculum and assessment, one of the things that strikes me is how effective an arts-based education is in helping to introduce a partition between assessment and learning. I was watching my son doing some math homework, and I asked, "How are those math problems, are they interesting to you?" He looked at me as if I was from outer space and said, "This is not math, Daddy, this is test-prep." It's clear to a third grader that test prep requires a certain set of skills, but it does not touch this other kind of critical activity where his primary commitments lie. For me, that is the most compelling part of arts education in practical terms. It's less about the skill-sets, about how good a dancer are you, and much more about the ability to narrate and imagine oneself and one's place in the world.



The idea of imagining one's place in the world leads me to one of the two final questions we wanted to pose about the sorts of lateral moves across sectors you've been describing. What have you learned about what makes these collaborations work? Which of these lessons are generalizable?



I can think of two ways to answer that question. For me, it has been interesting to think about administrative work as a domain of collaboration. I know that's a very dangerous proposition, because there are lots of reasons to worry about the instrumentalist tendencies that inform administrative intent. But if we look at the academic golden triangle of teaching, research and service, and think about service as administrative intelligence rather than just unpaid labor, then we can say that service is part of what makes collaboration possible. There's a practical moment in that formulation, one that pushes us to rethink the rational progressivism of administrative labor as a space of lateral circulation; you're in touch with other units, other faculties, other kinds of institutional commitments. There's a version of that work in the university; there's a version of it in the arts sphere; there's a version of it in any institutional site. The work begins to center on practices of assemblage, practices of the ensemble.



That's a fascinating description. You point to some of the reasons the CSPC has been deliberate in bridging some of higher education's internal labor divides, particularly between faculty and staff, but also between universities and community colleges. These bridges have been important not only because they have allowed us to access important skills, knowledges, and intelligences, but also because they extend a recognition of research and teaching activities beyond the university faculty positions that are supposed to monopolize them. And it reflects back an image of research and teaching as part of a collective or distributed network of intelligence and inquiry - as a collaborative and interdependent endeavor, not an individualized and autonomous one. It's important to an initiative like the CSPC that the knowledge network extends into and across institutions of higher education, not just outward from them.



Yes. That dynamic is also at play in a different answer to your question about practice. In addition to the PTA, my other long-term experience with collaboration is working in the editorial collective that oversees the publication of *Social Text*. I've seen it morph over twenty-odd years from an unruly collective where forty or fifty people would show up for meetings, submissions might wait a year or two before discussion, and the process for vetting them wasn't at all clear. I became a co-editor at the same moment I that became a dean, and so, for better and for worse, that was the sensibility that I applied to the position. The bureaucratic solution was to eliminate the collective vetting of submissions and to turn a collective of reviewers into a collective of writers. I wanted to rethink the nature of the work that was going to keep that collective collecting something, making use, having labor together, co-laboring.

That also could be something that's generalized. In my experience, you really have to begin by asking one critical but often overlooked question: what's the work we can do together that we can't do on our own? In the case of *Social Text*, this meant that we had to let go of one idea of the collective and to accept different sorts of administrative structures into the heart of something that might have felt better without them, in order to keep the collective form going. I'd connect the more formal domain of academia and the more informal one of the editorial collective through the question of what it means to recognize administrative work as enabling us to labor together and to perform the work of collaboration.



I agree. It's a good reminder that collective structures need to be reinvented, need to be rethought, and that this rethinking is part of the labor of collaboration.



Since we've turned to the topic of future collaborations, let me turn to the second of our two final questions. As you look towards the future, what do you see as compelling for those of us who are interested in thinking about how to develop collaborative, cross-methodological, and cross-sectoral projects in arts and culture arenas?



Well, I have a line on organization that I'm trying to promote. I want to insist upon organizing work and organizational form as part of the work we do, which is *different* than institution building. The question of the future really is tied to the question of what these sustainable forms and elements are.

Rather than following the blissful, modernist approach to the future that says let's break with history and make up something new, I would invite us to look at the history of organizational forms over the last century. Consider an amalgamation of three organizational moments. The first is the craft and professional organization; the second is the industrial organization; the third is the political party. In terms of collaborative work, I think that one has to be willing to move across those organizational domains.

For the professional craft, organization means doing administrative work, doing the work of professional organizations, taking responsibility for professional socialization, thinking about the mentoring and all the free labor that you do - whether it is helping other people get published, doing tenure reviews, all that - as a set of professional commitments and obligations one needs to invest in, if there's going to be anything like governance, but also if there's going to be anything like a reinvention of the professions themselves. This moment includes the substantial administrative labor that goes into the generation of new departments and programs like Arts Politics at NYU or Cultural Studies at UW Bothell.

The second of the three forms, the industrial organization, asks us to think about productive capacity. If we're part of the knowledge industry or, dare I say it, the creative economy, then we need to ask about the relationships between the university

and other institutional sites. For cultural studies, there are critical, strategic alliances and relationships to be built with media organizations, technology industries, a wide array of arenas in which people who work in universities are relatively insignificant. For me, this approach is much more compelling than the typical laments about commercialization of the university since most of those laments falsely cast the university as an innocent under siege, when in fact the university has always been implicated in the promotion of research agendas that work on the behalf of business and industry.

The third organizational form, the political party, names the moment when we as critical intellectuals speak with and against the state. It's one reason why issues of censorship, or academic freedom, retain their import. Here, I'd want to bring back - in the formulation of the (small c-) 'communist' party - something that's comprehensively interested in what society as a whole might look like and where we can make collective claims on the social wealth that we generate. There's a direction to that, there's an intervention, there's a comprehensiveness, and there's a set of possibilities that asks the question of how we participate in this political domain and what ideas we have about society as such. It's engaged when we, as artists and intellectuals, speak in the voice of the state and speak back to the state.

Being able to move across those three organizational forms, or moments, is not prescriptive. It doesn't mean you have to join this organization and quit that one, or that everyone should join this political party. It means thinking about the future through these historical and organizational legacies, and finding ways that our particular practices can articulate across those different moments. That would be a way in which we could deliver ourselves to a future we would want to inhabit.



And where do you see universities and other educational institutions as fitting into those discussions?



That's why issues of academic labor are so important. Labor is the thing that moves you. After all, we're talking about administrative work, we're talking about public work, we're talking about all of the things that otherwise take us outside the realm of our expertise. Ultimately, this is where we want to wrap ourselves around the idea of the creative, since this is what social creativity amounts to. It's not just about community building. It has those organizational aspects, but it also has a labor moment, and it involves a question of identity. I'm not making anything up here: I'm just giving names to what most people are doing anyways. The significance of our practice has to be elaborated beyond the sense that, oh god, I just can't serve on this committee anymore, or I'm just burnt out with this journal, or this collective is no fun anymore. If there's a syntax, a grammar to those activities and practices, then you know you're going to fill them with something else, and that the work will go on.



Well, the logical conclusion would be that we could go on for a while, and I'm sure we could. But this also might be a good moment to close. Thank you, Randy, Diane, and Kanta, for this expansive discussion.